

by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.'

Juneteenth was first celebrated in the Texas state capital in 1867 under the direction of the Freedmen's Bureau and remains the oldest known celebration of slavery's demise, commemorating freedom while acknowledging the sacrifices and contributions made by courageous African Americans towards making our great nation the more conscious and accepting country that it has become.

As the nation prepares to celebrate July 4th, our Nation's independence day, it is a time to reflect on the accomplishments of our nation and its people.

The celebration of Juneteenth followed the most devastating conflict in our country's history, in the aftermath of a civil war that pitted brother against brother, neighbor against neighbor and threatened to tear the fabric of our union apart forever that America truly became the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Juneteenth honors the end of the 400 years of suffering African Americans endured under slavery and celebrates the perseverance that has been the hallmark of the African American experience in the struggle for equality.

But as the poet Langston Hughes reminds us in his famous poem, 'Mother to Son,' life in America for African Americans "ain't been no crystal stair.'

The post-bellum period in America was marked by violence and terrorism against African Americans as they sought to make real the promises of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

General Granger's reading of General Order No. 3 ended the remaining vestiges of the system of chattel slavery, a form of perpetual human bondage that held generations of Africans in captivity in the United States for two-hundred and forty-eight years and opened a new chapter in American history.

Recognizing the importance of this date, former slaves coined the word "Juneteenth" to celebrate the occasion, the first of which occurred in the Texas state capital in 1867 under the direction of the Freedmen's Bureau.

Juneteenth was and is a living symbol of freedom for people who did not have it.

Juneteenth remains the oldest known celebration of America's freedom from slavery.

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The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Freedom is never free," and African American labor leader A. Phillip Randolph often said "Freedom is never given. It is won." Truer words were never spoken.

We should all recognize the power and the ironic truth of those statements, and we should pause to remember the enormous price paid by all Americans in our country's quest to realize its promise.

In recent years, a number of National Juneteenth Organizations have arisen to take their place alongside older organizations—all with the mission to promote and cultivate knowledge and appreciation of African American history and culture.

I am reminded that the first legislation introduced in Congress recognizing Juneteenth occurred a quarter century ago, in 1996, when H.J. Res. 195 was introduced by Congresswoman Barbara Rose Collins of Michigan and I have introduced similar legislation annually since the 109th Congress.

So it has been a long road we have travelled to get to this day, even longer that the 15-year journey taken to pass the bill making the Birthday of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. a national holiday.

Juneteenth celebrates African American freedom, and in so doing celebrates America's history and promise, while encouraging selfdevelopment and respect for all cultures.

But it must always remain a reminder to us all that liberty and freedom are precious birth-

rights of all Americans, which must be jealously guarded and preserved for future generations.

In conclusion, I wish to take a moment to salute two of the unsung heroes who helped bring us to this day: the late Texas State Representative Al Edwards and nonagenarian Opal Lee, known affectionately as the "Grandmother of Juneteenth."

In 1852, Frederick Douglass famously asked: "What to the slave is the 4th of July?"

In 2021, we can reply that it is the beginning of the American Promise that would be fulfilled and made real for all Americans, including the descendants of slaves, on June 19, 1865, 'Juneteenth Day.'

That is why we celebrate Juneteenth and that is why I urge all Members to join me in voting to pass H.R. 1320/S. 475, the "Juneteenth National Independence Day Act."

#### SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate of February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint committees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules Committee—of the time, place and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily Digest will prepare this information for printing in the Extensions of Remarks section of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Monday and Wednesday of each week.

Meetings scheduled for Thursday, June 24, 2021 may be found in the Daily Digest of today's RECORD.